

# Stats indicate more frequent lockdowns in province's jails

exclusive

KARRISSA DONKIN  
LEGISLATURE BUREAU

FREDERICTON • The number of lockdowns at New Brunswick jails more than tripled in recent years, but the Department of Public Safety can't pinpoint why inmates are spending more time confined to their cells.

Figures on lockdowns obtained through a right to information request indicate that behaviour problems and searches for contraband are two of the reasons why prisoners are spending more time locked down.

In 2011 and 2012, staff carried out 63 unit lockdowns and 21 individual lockdowns at New Brunswick jails. Those numbers soared in 2013 and 2014, with 236 unit lockdowns and 463 individual lockdowns. Unit lockdowns see a prisoner in a unit contained to their cells, while individual lockdowns see specific offenders confined.

Not only did the number of lockdowns increase in 2013 and 2014, but the length of time prisoners spent confined in their cells went up too. One unit at Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre was locked down for seven days while staff searched for contraband in 2014. Another unit at Madawaska was locked down for seven days that same year for "behaviour management".

The statistics come from six provincial facilities — Madawaska, the Saint John Regional Correctional Centre, Dalhousie Regional Correctional Centre, Southeast Regional Correctional Centre, the New Brunswick Women's Correctional Centre and the New Brunswick Youth Centre.

The numbers indicate that New Brunswick's jail system is becoming overcrowded and can't serve the needs of prisoners with complex mental health issues, said Michael Boudreau,



Statistics obtained by the Telegraph-Journal indicate that provincial jails are being locked down more often.

PHOTO: TELEGRAPH-JOURNAL ARCHIVES

a criminology professor at St. Thomas as University.

Two years of increases don't constitute a trend, but Boudreau said prisoners across the country — including federal institutions — are starting to see similar problems, stemming back to the Conservative government's tough-on-crime agenda.

"The changes the federal government made to mandatory minimum sentencing, we're starting to see some of the negative effects of that now in terms of overcrowding in institutions. What we're also seeing a bit more of now is not just understaffing in some institutions ... but an inattention to inmates with mental health problems."

The Telegraph-Journal asked the Department of Public Safety what is causing the increase in lockdowns at provincial jails and if overcrowding is a problem. No one from the department was available for an interview on Monday or Tuesday.

Department spokesman Paul Bradley said conduct and behaviour determines whether a lockdown is required, and the number of lockdowns fluctuate from year to year. He said New Brunswick's jails are not filled to the capacity of 546 inmates.

"Any over-capacity issue is short term and is addressed in a manner that ensures safety and security for offenders and staff."

Bradley also defended the use of lockdowns, saying that confining prisoners to their cells occasionally is "crucial" to keeping staff and offenders safe. In the case of individual lockdowns, each situation is reviewed daily through the "offender management process" to get prisoners back to regular programs as soon as possible.

In Ontario, a Toronto Star report found the number of lockdowns had soared inside provincial jails between 2009 and 2014, from nearly 900 lockdowns from 259. The provincial government told the newspaper the lockdowns were caused by staff shortages.

At the federal level, correctional investigator Howard Sapers, who acts as

## Lockdowns in New Brunswick jails: By the numbers

2013: Year with most lockdowns (141 units and 332 individual lockdowns)

7: Number of days inmates in a unit at the Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre were confined to their cells in 2014 on two occasions

120: Number of hours units were locked down for "behaviour management" at Madawaska Regional Correctional Centre in 2014 and the Saint John Regional Correctional Centre in 2013

a watchdog of Canada's prison system, has warned about overcrowding leading to violence inside the country's prisons.

The president of the union that represents New Brunswick jail staff said some lockdowns at Southeast and Dalhousie may be caused by a new supervision model that puts guards closer to prisoners. CUPE 1251 president Everett Godfrey said the system isn't working because there isn't enough funding for inmates' programs.

"They're building bigger jails with bigger units and fewer officers. Sometimes it works. Sometimes it doesn't. To make it work, you've got to keep these individuals busy and you've got to give them something to do."

The new direct supervision system gives offenders more responsibility, Bradley said, and has created a safer environment.

While lockdowns fix problems in jails in the short term, Boudreau said they don't address the root causes such as mental illness and smuggling contraband into jails.

"Lockdowns just in some cases put a lid on the problem," he said.

"If you put a lid on a pot of boiling water, eventually that lid is going to blow off."

# Canada should take stock of its role in the world economy, says Chamber CEO

Perrin Beatty says a majority government is a chance to look at Canada's role in trade, diplomacy



Perrin Beatty  
PHOTO: CONTRIBUTED

KARRISSA DONKIN  
LEGISLATURE BUREAU

FREDERICTON • As Canada enters into a new majority government, set to be led by Liberal Leader Justin Trudeau, a business leader and former parliamentarian is urging all political parties to take stock of Canada's place in the world.

Perrin Beatty, the CEO of the Canadian Chamber of Commerce and a Progressive Conservative Member of Parliament between 1972 and 1993, wants to see Canada take a more confident view of itself on the world stage. The new government, he said, should evaluate how it feels about trade, diplomacy and what role Canadian businesses can play in the

global economy.

"It is more important than ever before that we have a view of ourselves that's internationalist, that's engaged, that's confident and believes that Canada has something to offer the world," Beatty said on Tuesday in a meeting with the Telegraph-Journal's editorial board. "That certainly extends down through anything we're doing through the economy as well."

In the 1988 election, when free trade dominated the agenda, Beatty remembers feeling a crisis among Ontario's business community — a fear they couldn't be good enough to compete with the Americans. But since then,

Canada's trade with the United States has grown, helping fund social programs, education and the construction of roads in the process.

"I hope that all of the parties will take stock and look at what's their role in the Canadian political life, what is their view of Canada's role in the world and where we should be and take a much more confident view," he said.

While Canada's new government takes stock of its view in the world, Conservatives are taking stock of where their party stands and what spot it inhabits on the political spectrum. Prime Minister Stephen Harper has announced his resignation, but the party has yet to name the interim leader that will guide the party until it finds a permanent new face.

Beatty, a former Tory under the old Progressive Conservative party, didn't want to talk about partisan politics because the Canadian Chamber of Commerce doesn't take political sides.

But he said the party is likely to be doing some soul searching.

"Whenever a party isn't successful, it needs to go back and rethink what it's done right and what it's done wrong," Beatty said. "One of the advantages it has is with a majority government, it has the time to sit back and take a look at what is the niche it wants to fill in public life."

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"I hope that all of the parties will take stock."

PERRIN BEATTY

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